Today's
The Herald-Palladium
included inside

Fitzgerald named MSU head coach
Page B1

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Dowagiac News

Established 1897 • Serving Dowagiac, Sister Lakes and Cassopolis **DECEMBER 6, 2025** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

Underground Railroad Society founder wins national award

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

VANDALIA — A local woman dedicated to preserving the history of the Underground Railroad was recently recognized on a national scale.

Underground Railroad Society of Cass County recently announced Cathy LaPointe was awarded the Hortense Simmons Memorial Prize for Advancement of Knowledge from the Underground Railroad Free Press. LaPointe is an original founder of Underground Railroad Society of Cass County in 2009, long-time treasurer and volunteer executive director.

"Many people researched and told the amazing history of Cass County, MIchigan," LaPointe said. "I'm proud to be part a long line of local historians telling the story of the Underground Railroad and its legacy in Cass County – courage in difficult circumstances. Awards tell our story to the world and the world needs this story. I'm proud of URSCC and Cass County."

URSCC has been a Vandalia-located nonprofit since 2009 with a mission to "Research and educate about the Underground Railroad in Cass County, Michigan and restore four buildings as focal points for telling this story." Readers are encouraged to visit their www.urscc.org to learn more about the URSCC's 20-site driving tour, Bonine House Research Library, and three annual events – UGRR Wax Museum, UGRR Days Festival, and Christmas at Bonine House.

URSCC owns and has restored four Underground Railroad related sites – Bonine House, Bonine Carriage House, Stephen Bogue House and Brownsville School No. 1. Evidence

See **LAPOINTE**, page A4

Photo provided
Cathy LaPointe poses for a photo on the Bonine House porch in Vandalia.

Harding's to close after 49 years in Dowagiac

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A business that has served the Dowagiac community for decades will soon be closing its doors.

According to store employees, Harding's Market, 102 Park Pl., Dowagiac, will be closing its doors Jan. 15, 2026 after 49 years of service. According to phone book records, the business originally opened its doors to Dowagiac customers in 1977 at 102 Park Place, a building that was originally housed a Kroger store from 1965 to 1973. It then became Dean's Thrifty Mart and then Ed's Friendly Viking in 1976 before becoming a Harding's location.

Founded in 1944, the company currently operates 30 grocery locations in Southwest Michigan and two in Northern Indiana. Attempts to reach Harding's leadership via phone were unsuccessful at the time of publication.

In a Wednesday Facebook post, Bakeman addressed the impending closure of the store:

"I am saddened to hear the recent news about Harding's Markets in Dowagiac closing this coming January. Harding's has been more than just a grocery store to me and to many in our community. Over the years, during my weekly visits, I came to truly appreciate not only the convenience and quality they offered, but the friendly, familiar faces that greeted me each time I walked through the door. The staff provided consistent, caring service to my family, and many of them became friends I looked forward to seeing.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
Harding's Market will be closing its doors in January after 49 years of service.

See **HARDING'S**, page A4

Extended hours shopping event returns to Dowagiac on Thursdays

SUBMITTED

DOWAGIAC — Jolly 'Ole St. Nick and strolling musicians will be featured in downtown Dowagiac on Thursday evenings in December, beginning Dec. 4, as specialty shops host three nights of holiday merriment and personalized shopping.

The fifth-annual Extended Hours Holiday Shopping Event, which was organized by Vickie Phillipson, owner of Cottage Gallery, expands this year from one to three Thursday evenings in December.

"We are delighted to host these special nights of shopping beneath the holiday lights of our central business district," Phillipson said. "Customers will enjoy leisurely and personalized

See **SHOPPING**, page A4

The Cassopolis/Vandalia Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon-tying ceremony for Mega Liquor & Smoke, 305 E. State St., Cassopolis.
Photo provided

Mega Liquor opens Cassopolis location

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Cassopolis customers now have a new place to purchase their spirits of choice.

The Cassopolis/Vandalia Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon-tying ceremony for Mega Liquor & Smoke, 305 E. State St., Cassopolis. The event featured giveaways and refreshments.

The new liquor store, owned by the Singh family, offers a wide selection of beer, wine, spirits and smoking products.

Borgess-Lee Foundation hosts annual Tree of Love lighting

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — One area foundation turned a part of Dowagiac pink Wednesday in support of providing life-saving care to women in Cass County.

Community members gathered at Farr Park, 501 Main St., to attend the annual Borgess-Lee Hospital Foundation Tree of Love lighting ceremony. The tree, donated and wrapped with more than 1,500 pink lights, illuminated the night sky as members of the foundation, hospital staff and the community joined together in celebration. The tree was blessed by Janie Reifenberg of Honor Credit Union and with the push of a button from cancer survivor Nikki Rohacs, the pink lights appeared.

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Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
From left: Jayne White, Jannie Reifeberg, Beth Cripe, Nikki Rohacs.

See **TREE**, page A4

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Today's obituaries • Page A3
Barbara Evans, Clark Andrzejewski, Thomas Carter, Dian Brooks, Betty Moore, Pete Stull

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Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

FRANKLY

Got a tip or quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ "The 'Golden Stove' is finally home." What an amazing story and it's just incredible how everything came together perfectly.

■ Congratulations, Buchanan! The downtown looks fantastic. It was a long, long, long wait, but finally it looks great!

■ We began the year with DOGE, cutting jobs and expenses, cutting aid to those starving around the world. Now we see President Trump has spent over $71 million since January for his golf trips.

■ What happened to NFL officiating? Is there corruption or just incompetence that is causing so many blown calls?

■ Suddenly my Facebook is asking me if five million is enough to retire on ... Are you kidding me? I'll be lucky to survive on $1,500 per month.

■ Where are all of the snow shovelers? I pay well.

■ Please volunteer this holiday season. You may find you enjoy it and will continue throughout the year.

■ Thank you Pokagon Band for the Thanksgiving food boxes.

Museum to host Holidays at the Heritage Center

By PAXTON STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Maritime Museum announced the return of its seasonal celebration called Holidays at the Heritage Center.

According to a news release, the celebration includes several events that will run through Jan. 4.

"Each year, the museum transforms into a sparkling winter wonderland filled with festive décor, family-friendly activities and holiday cheer for visitors of all ages," the release stated.

The first event is the Holiday Twilight Concert, featuring the Kal-Haven Strings, which will take place from 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Dec. 17.

"Immerse yourself in an enchanting twilight concert with the Kal-Haven Strings duet," the release stated. "Megan Healy and Lydia Raymond will fill the evening with an uplifting blend of holiday favorites, creating a festive and family-friendly atmosphere perfect for celebrating the season together."

The concert is free with a donation of $5 or a non-perishable food item.

The second event, Selfies with Santa, will take place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 20.

"The holiday excitement continues as Santa returns to the Maritime Heritage Center," the release stated. "Come watch for Santa as he makes his entrance into the Deary-Mead Family Grand Atrium for photos, warm chats, and plenty of holiday cheer."

North Pole refreshments will be served at the Jerry Mason Learning Center. Selfies with Santa is a free event.

Cookies and Cocoa with Captain Bob will be the third event in the holiday celebration, which will take place from noon to 1 p.m. on Dec. 20.

"Before or after your Selfie with Santa, join Captain Bob as he reads books in the Jerry Mason Learning Center from the newly updated museum Ship's Store," the release stated. "Sip hot cocoa, nibble cookies and soak in a warm, festive, family-friendly atmosphere full of holiday cheer."

The event is free and open to the public.

Part of the celebration includes free admission from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the first Sunday of every month from November through April of 2026.

This special offer gives residents and visitors the opportunity to explore the museum's exhibits and discover the maritime heritage of the Great Lakes region at no cost.

"This year has been one of growth and memorable milestones for the museum," Executive Director Bailey Sisoy-Moore said in the release. "Holidays at the Heritage Center gives us the chance to celebrate community, spread seasonal cheer and thank everyone who makes our mission possible. We look forward to welcoming families, friends and visitors for another magical year."

Holidays at the Heritage Center is sponsored by Greg and Marian O'Niel.

Photo provided

Cookies and Cocoa with Captain Bob will be the third event held in this year's Holidays at the Heritage Center celebration in South Haven.

Niles Scream Park raises more than $153,000 for local groups

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Niles Scream Park, one of Michiana's most popular autumn attractions, recently completed another successful season at its always changing 44-acre site on Mayflower Road between Niles and Buchanan.

This year, the 52nd consecutive year for running the project, the Scream Park raised more than $153,300 for more than 70 area children's organizations, civic groups and other charities.

Proceeds benefited local schools and service organizations including groups such as the Boy. Scouts, Haunters Against Hate, Lake Shore High School Stage Crew, LaPorte Little Theatre and Haunters for Hope. The funds raised also will be used for six different college scholarships for local high school seniors. Since 1996, the Scream Park has donated more than $2.8 million.

In addition to the cash donations, the Niles Scream Park supported many local causes, auctions and benefits with ticket donations totaling more than $7,200. Additionally, they awarded $6,750 in college scholarships in 2025.

The project included seven haunted attractions and provided volunteer opportunities both in construction and operation of the Scream Park. Plans are underway for even more frightening additions in the coming year. More than 20,000 hours were volunteered by more than 550 different people before and during its 24 nights of operation to prepare and operate the seasonal attraction.

The year also marked a visit from Park interior visitor number 2,800,000. Jennifer Lopez of Elkhart, Ind. was the special milestone visitor. She received a gift pack when she visited the

Scream Park on Sunday, Oct. 20, 2025 with her friend Nathan Soto.

The Scream Park is recognized nationally in the haunted attraction industry. It was listed at No. 12 on the Haunted House Chicago Official 2025 Top 13 list. The Scream Park also was voted one of the Top 5 "Bucket List Haunts" in the country by America Haunts.

Photo provided

Niles Scream Park hosts a party for its cast and crew.

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Notre Dame's Naval ROTC program named best in nation

COURTESY OF NOTRE DAME

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The United States Department of Defense has honored the University of Notre Dame's Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps as the nation's top Navy collegiate program for the 2023-24 academic year. This comes after the Department of Defense, also called the Department of War, bestowed the same honor on the University's Army ROTC program in May.

Presented annually, the Educational Institution Partnership Excellence Award recognizes the outstanding ROTC unit and host educational institution from each military department based on accomplishments in three areas: performance, educational institution support and other noteworthy achievements.

"We are proud of our Midshipmen and Navy ROTC leaders, whose character, discipline and concern for the common good represent the best of Notre Dame," University President Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., said. "It is wonderful to see them recognized alongside our Army ROTC cadets, and on behalf of the entire campus community, we congratulate them on this prestigious honor."

In a recent ceremony at the reflecting pool on campus, Midshipman Annika Kell, a senior environmental science major, presented Father Dowd with a certificate of recognition for the award.

They were joined by CAPT John Smith, commanding officer of the Naval ROTC unit; CDR Matt Wood, executive officer of the unit; senior mechanical engineering major Douglass Tackney, midshipman executive officer of the unit; and senior mechanical engineering major Charlie Alberino, midshipman operations officer of the unit, among others.

"The Naval ROTC program plays a critical role in developing our young men and women for service as commissioned officers in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, striking a balance between leadership, academics, physical fitness and community involvement," Smith said. "The success of the program depends on many factors, most notably the selfless dedication of our students and staff and the unwavering support of the University. To that end, we are grateful to the Department of War for this recognition, which is a testament to the service and character of not just the unit, but Notre Dame as a whole."

Notre Dame supports the Naval ROTC program in many ways. Historically, the University's presidents have participated in the annual pass-in-review and presentation of the Commander's Cup award. The University provides active-duty staff with parking, tuition assistance, facilities access and inclusion in faculty social events. The University also supports midshipmen by counting naval science classes toward degree completion and providing access to campus facilities.

The Naval ROTC unit supports both Notre Dame and the community. Midshipmen collectively average 40 hours per week of community service to seven organizations. They work with the assistant Marine officer instructor to provide mentorship, advisement and evaluation to six high school Junior ROTC programs in the area. They also support veteran events, including memorials, holidays and ceremonies, and provide color guard service through Notre Dame's Office of Military and Veterans Affairs.

"This recognition reflects the commitment our Midshipmen make to selflessly serve our nation, as so many of our Naval ROTC program graduates have done for decades," said Kenneth Heckel, the Sergeant John F. Crowley Director of the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs.

OBITUARIES

Dian Brooks

September 25, 1946 – December 2, 2025

Dian Brooks, 79, of Dowagiac, died unexpectedly, at home December 2, 2025.

Her life began September 25, 1946, born to Paul and Melba Brooks.

Dian retired from Dowagiac Union Schools after teaching first and second grades for thirty years. After retirement she volunteered with Michigan's Southern Baptist Disaster Relief working in feeding, disaster clean-up and as a Chaplain. Hurricane Katrina was her first volunteer trip. Dian is survived by her niece Melissa Milligan, four great nieces and nephews and one great-great niece. She was preceded in death by her parents Paul and Melba Brooks and brother Bruce Brooks.

Family and friends will gather in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, 615 East Main Street, Niles on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 10:00 with her service to follow at 11:00a.m. Dian will be laid to rest in Silverbrook Cemetery. The family prefers contributions in memory of Dian be made to your choice of Church or Charity. Envelopes will be available at the funeral home.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Thomas Carter

November 1, 1955 – November 8, 2025

Thomas Carter, passed away on November 8, 2025, at the age of 70.

Born in 1955 to Jane and Edward Carter, Tom grew up in Niles, Michigan, and was a proud graduate of Niles High School, Class of 1974.Tom's heart always belonged to Diamond Lake in Cassopolis, Michigan, where he spent nearly every summer of his life on Diamond Island. It was there that he built many friendships – some of which became family – and created some of his happiest memories. In his teens and twenties, he could often be found water skiing across the lake, and in later years, he loved nothing more than boating with his family, soaking in the beauty and joy of being on the water.

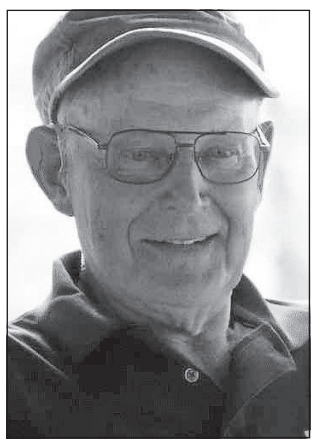
A lifelong car enthusiast, Tom had a particular passion for MGA British Racing cars, restoring them and showing them with care and pride.

After a long journey with Multiple Sclerosis, Tom is finally at peace. His spirit and memory will live on in the love and laughter of his surviving family. Son-Andrew (Angie) and their 3 children-Max, Oliver, and Addy. Daughter-Erin (Michael), and Sisters-Sue and Carol. He is preceded in death by his loving Mother, Jane Carter and his Father, Edward Carter.

A celebration of Tom's life will be held on Friday, December 5th at 5pm with a gathering before starting at 4pm. To leave a message for the family, please go to ChapelHillMemorial.com

Pete Stull

March 17, 1932 – November 29, 2025



Pete Stull, age 93, passed away in Jenison, Michigan November 29, 2025. He was born March 17, 1932 in Kentucky. He began his military career in 1955 and married Sylvia Tobicash in 1963. They had three children Nicholas (deceased), Kimberly, and Christopher (Kit). While he and Sylvia divorced in 1988, they remained lifelong friends, continuing to celebrate family holidays together.

Pete loved people and was gifted at telling stories. He left a positive impact on everyone he met and always had a joke to make them smile. He was a career military officer spending time in the United States Army and the Michigan National Guard. He served two tours in Vietnam. Pete was also stationed at Fort Knox, KY and continued his military career with an assignment in Germany. He continued to serve full-time in the military assigned to the Michigan National Guard. He held assignments as the commander of the 246th Armor Battalion and Commandant at Fort Custer. He was responsible for the first draft of President Ford's funeral. After a long and distinguished military career, he became the city manager of Wayland, Michigan for the next decade and finished his working career as the village manager in Caledonia, Michigan. After retirement, Pete began the snowbird life, spending time each winter in Florida.

After settling in Wayland, Pete met and fell in love with Haroldene Bruinsma and became great friends with her son, Joe, whom he treated as another son. Pete and Haroldene enjoyed time with friends, family, and traveling. After Haroldene passed away in 2002, Pete was fortunate to have found love one final time with Joyce Coleman, becoming great friends with her daughter, Joyce Ann and son, Jeff. Pete once said, "I am so blessed to have had three families."

Pete is preceded in death by his son, Nicholas Stull; four brothers and three sisters; and his former loves Haroldene Bruinsma and Joyce Coleman. He is survived by his daughter, Kimberly Stull and son-in-law, Chris Booth; son, Christopher (Kit) and daughter-in-law, Katie Stull; bonus son and wife, Joe and Oanh Bruinsma; former wife, Sylvia Stull; grandchildren Nicholas Stull, MaKenna Stull, Myra Booth, Andy Bruinsma, Matt Bruinsma; and his many nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and -nephews.

Visitation will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, December 5, 2025, with a service to follow at 11 a.m. at Kubiak-Cook Funeral Services – Wayland Chapel, 312 N. Main Street, Wayland, MI 49348. The burial will take place immediately following the service 1:30 p.m. at Fort Custer National Cemetery, 15501 Dickman Road, Augusta, MI In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a veteran organization of your choice. The family welcomes memories and messages at www.kubiakcookwayland.com in their online guestbook.

Barbara Evans

March 3, 1937 – November 22, 2025

Barbara Ann Evans, age 88 years of Niles, Michigan; wife, mother, grandmother, bookkeeper, traveler, and devout Christian died peacefully at 12:35 p.m. on Saturday, November 22, 2025 with her family gathered around at her home following a brief illness.

She was born on March 3, 1937 in Constantine, Michigan to Fred R. and Doris M. (Watson) Noecker, coming to Niles with her family in 1942.

She graduated from Niles' former Central High School, and was first employed at the former Dean's Drug Store at the corner of East Main and Second Street in Niles. Soon after that, she was employed in the offices of the French Paper Company in Niles, and later became an Administrative Assistant in the executive suite at the former Buchanan "World Wide Headquarters" of Clark Equipment Company. After Clark moved to another state, she moved to the office of Iam P. Bhisitkul, M.D. where she remained until his retirement.

Barb was a long-time member of the First Missionary Church (now Summit Church), where she served as a Deaconess, church board secretary, financial bookkeeper, Sunday School teacher, and Women's Ministry leader. While at Clark Equipment, she was a member of the Clark Affiliate of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. In later years, she volunteered with the Pawating Auxiliary at Lakeland Hospital (now Spectrum Lakeland). Barb enjoyed traveling with her family, including highlights such as Hawaii and Flagstaff, Arizona, and collected souvenir bells from each location.

She enjoyed cooking at home, including the family favorite cheesy potatoes, and was a very active and supportive grandmother and great-grandmother with a nearly perfect attendance record at public events featuring her grandkids, even bundling-up to sit in the bleachers of soccer games.

While working at Dean's, a certain young grocery clerk at the former A&P store – just around the corner on Second Street – took a meal break at Dean's, and, finding Barb to be an outstanding soda-jerk, he came around more often, quickly increasing to several daily breaks from work. On Barb's birthday, March 3, 1956 at the Assembly of God Church at 13th & Main (now Michiana Christian Embassy, and now farther east) she married said grocer, Billy Dee Evans. The newlyweds first lived in a few small, temporary residences, before moving to the new Oak Manor subdivision, purchasing a house on the west side of Spansail Drive, only to move a few years later across the street to their longtime home. For several years, they were winter residents of Fruitland, Florida.

Surviving family includes her husband of a remarkable Sixty-nine years, Bill Evans, and their daughter, Anita (& Orrin) Belcher of Niles; grandsons Matthew (& Cindi) Belcher and Jeremy (& Rhonda) Belcher; great-grandchildren Truen, Marissa, Jedrek, the twins Ezra and Elise, and Ivan; and Barb's brother, Roger Noecker of Niles, a sister-in-law, Janice (Mrs. Harry) Noecker, and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Fred and Doris Noecker, and by a brother, Harry Dean Noecker, who died in 2018.

Funeral Services for Barbara Evans will be at Noon on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at Summit Church, 1700 West River Road, at U.S.12 in Niles, with Summit's Lead Pastor Dan Miller officiating. The family will receive relatives and friends on Tuesday at Summit from 10:00 a.m. until Noon. Committal Services will be private, on Wednesday, at Mission Hills.

Contributions in memory of Barb may be made to Summit Church, 1700 West River Road, Niles, Michigan, 49120; https://summitniles.com/home.

Arrangements were completed at the Halbritter-Wickens Funeral Home, 615 East Main Street in Niles. Memories and condolences may be left at: www.halbritterwickens.com.

Psalm 90:10 indicates that our lives might be 70 years, or if strong, 80 years, but Barb seems to have been unusually strong to remain active for another 8 years, and all of those years used well, serving others at the soda fountain, corporate offices, medical clinic, hospital and church. Perhaps more important was her love for her grand and great-grandchildren, for Anita and Orrin, and always the most love for Bill; all evidence of fulfilling the command to love God and love people.

David Andrzejewski

July 30, 1966 – November 24, 2025

David Clark Andrzejewski, 59, of Cassopolis, died peacefully Monday, November 24, 2025, in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began July 30, 1966 in South Bend, Indiana, the oldest of eight children. Dave was a 1984 graduate of Ross Beaty High School, he then attended Grand Valley State University.

Dave was a Journeyman Meat Cutter, covering over forty years, beginning at Kroger and ending his career at Martins.

Due to his love of sports, Dave invested his time coaching football, baseball and softball in Cassopolis and River Valley. He was a passionate Fighting Irish, White Sox, Dolphins and Chiefs fan. Dave adored his daughters and granddaughter, making sure that they wanted for nothing and shared with them his love of comedy, science fiction, and sports. He was a weather fanatic and amateur storm chaser and often brought along his daughters who he enjoyed sharing his interests with. Dave used his quick wit and wicked sense of humor to master the art of sarcasm, which was evidenced by his deep love of stand-up comedy and cinema. He was a big fan of science fiction, especially Star Trek, and was an avid fan of the entire comic book genre owning an extensive collection, as well as being a collector of action figures and sports memorabilia. Dave had an impressive memory for sports and history.

Dave will be deeply missed by family and friends. He is survived by two daughters, Mairin Andrzejewski, Emily Andrzejewski; one grand-daughter, Kasady Nova; his mother, Lynn Makay; five sisters, Elaine (Stephen) Green, Jeanne Makay, Joanne Makay, Jacque Makay, Marye Bailey; two brothers, Don (Jude) Makay, and Jon Makay; and his canine companion Ernie and Baxter.

He was preceded in death by his father, Ronald Andrzejewski and his step-father, Philip Makay. Private Services have taken place.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Betty Moore

December 22, 1944 – November 22, 2025

Betty Jean Moore, 80, died peacefully Saturday, November 22, 2025, in the comfort of her family's presence.

Her life began December 22, 1944 in Dowagiac, Michigan, the youngest child and only daughter of Clyde and Virgina Moore.

Betty could often be found doing crosswords, reading the Bible, or spending time on her laptop. She also enjoyed going on drives and looking at homes listed for sale. Betty loved animals, especially horses and all her special pets. Her favorite music was the Statler Brothers and gospel music. She loved the Lord and attended Creekside Church in Dowagiac. Most of all, she loved spending time with her family.

Betty will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her daughter, Kristin Moore; two sons, Johnny Moore and Michael Moore; one brother, Larry Moore and a host of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents and one brother, Roy Moore, Sr.

Family and friends will gather Friday, December 5, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. in the historic chapel in Mission Hills Memorial Garden, 61453 M-51 in Sumnerville with Pastor Jamie Saylor of Creekside Church in Dowagiac officiating.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

OBITUARY POLICY: Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $15. Extended obituaries are priced based on character count. If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge. For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

Trump allows more foreign ag workers, eases off ICE raids on farms

By TIM HENDERSON
Stateline.org (TNS)

Mario Tama / Getty Images / TNS
Federal agents block people protesting an ICE immigration raid at a nearby farm on July 10 near Camarillo, California.

In a tacit admission that U.S. food production requires foreign labor, the Trump administration is making it easier for farmers to employ guest workers from other countries.

At the same time, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in recent months appears to be refraining from conducting agricultural workplace raids, even as it scours Democratic-led cities for immigrants who are in the country illegally.

"We really haven't seen agriculture targeted with worksite enforcement efforts, and early this year we did," said Julia Gelatt, associate director of U.S. immigration policy at the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank.

The shifts come as many Americans are concerned about the rising cost of food, creating political problems for a president who campaigned on lowering them. This month, the administration also announced it would lift tariffs on some foreign food products, including bananas, beef, coffee and tomatoes.

To ease labor shortages on farms and ranches, the administration last month made changes to the federal H-2A visa program, which allows employers to hire foreign workers for temporary agricultural jobs when there aren't enough U.S.-born workers available. Under the new rule, the Department of Homeland Security will approve H-2A visas more quickly.

"Our immigration system has been broken for decades, and we finally have a President who is enforcing the law and prioritizing fixing programs farmers and ranchers rely on to produce the safest and most productive food supply in the world," the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in an email to Stateline.

But the move to increase the supply of foreign agricultural workers conflicts with a July statement by Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins that "the promise to America, to ensure that we have a 100 percent American workforce, stands."

Rollins also said the administration was committed to the mass deportation of immigrants who are here illegally, but that it would be "strategic so as not to compromise our food supply." Ultimately, she said, the solution would be increased automation of agricultural jobs.

The government has issued about 420,000 H-2A visas for agricultural workers every year since 2023, which amounts to about half of the 812,000 agricultural worker jobs. They are concentrated in states that grow fruits and vegetables as opposed to grains, which are increasingly planted and harvested using machines. The government expects an additional 119,000 visas to be issued under the new rule.

Almost half the H-2A visas in the 2025 fiscal year were in Florida (60,000), Georgia (44,000), California (37,000), Washington state (36,000) and North Carolina (28,000).

Lower wages

The new H-2A rule also includes new hourly wage guidelines that vary by state but are lower than previous wages, and allows employers to charge workers for housing that used to be free. In North Carolina, for instance, the new rate is $11.09 for unskilled workers compared with $16.16 last year. In California, the rate is $13.45 for unskilled workers compared with $19.97 last year, though minimum wage laws in California and some other states would apply to those jobs, according to a Cornell University analysis.

In North Carolina, farmers are looking forward to lower labor costs, said Lee Wicker, deputy director of the North Carolina Growers Association, a trade association that brought 11,000 guest workers to the state through the H-2A guest worker program last year.

"If you think farmers are making more money in these conditions, you're wrong. They're going broke," Wicker said. Workers will take a pay cut under new guidelines and will have to pay for housing, but that may help farmers stave off bankruptcy, he said.

"I'm not saying the workers are going to be happy about this, but I think they'll come back. Wages have gone down before and they kept coming," he added.

Jeffrey Dorfman, an agricultural and resource economics professor at North Carolina State University, said the changes will be a boon to the state's farmers.

"The move to lower the H-2A wages by the Trump administration will be very well received by growers in North Carolina and will save farmers tens of millions of dollars statewide," Dorfman said. "For many farmers, it will turn money-losing crops into money-making crops, if prices stay about where they are now."

Unionized California farmworkers are opposed to the pay cuts and loss of free housing in the new guest worker visa plan, said Antonio De Loera-Brust, a spokesperson for the United Farm Workers, which represents about 10,000 workers in California.

The union sued the administration over ICE raids in the fields earlier this year, but recently "it's been pretty quiet," he said.

"For us it's been really a one-two punch," De Loera-Brust said. "First came the raids, which hurt workers, and now in order to appease business interests, they make all these concessions on wages and the guest workers program."

Fewer raids

The administration quickly walked back a June directive to avoid raids on the agriculture and hospitality industries. Nevertheless, ICE raids on those employers have been more infrequent in the months since.

In June, ICE raided a dairy farm in New Mexico and a meatpacking plant in Nebraska. Since then, the agency has raided only a handful of food and agriculture employers, such as a July raid on a California marijuana grower and an Arizona restaurant chain, and a September raid to arrest Wisconsin dairy workers.

Earlier this month, ICE agents descended on an onion farm in Northern California, arresting four immigrants on charges of illegally selling farmworker visas.

Even as ICE ramps up its activity in North Carolina cities such as Charlotte and Raleigh, Wicker, of the growers trade group, said farms in the state have not been targeted.

Gelatt, of the Migration Policy Institute, said that's been true of farms and ranches in many states since June.

"In past administrations we've seen a very quiet de-emphasis of immigration enforcement at farms. You don't need to make an announcement. You don't need to fight in the courts," Gelatt said. "It is possible just to direct enforcement activities away from farms. It'll be hard to know if that's happened now, but I would not be surprised."

While farmworkers in California are seeing some relief from raids, life is still uneasy for them, De Loera-Brust said.

"Overall, they have clearly slowed down [raids] in ag areas, but that's not policy. They could resume at any time. People are living with uncertainty," he said.

Stateline is part of States Newsroom, a national nonprofit news organization focused on state policy. Visit at stateline.org.

SHOPPING

From page A1

service at each of our specialty shops, some of which will offer savings, treats and beverages, along with a new $100 drawing."

Also new this season, more than 20 downtown business and property owners joined forces to light the roof lines of their storefronts with Christmas lights. Phillipson said the project was started in late-October, when she approached her neighbors Jamie and Danielle Saylor, owners of Saylor's Front Street Pizzeria, to join her in lighting their building. "From there we said, let's see who else we can get to join us – as together – we do something special for our community."

Santa Claus kicked off this year's Extended Hours Holiday Shopping Event on Thursday, Dec. 4.

Photo provided
Santa Claus kicked off this year's Extended Hours Holiday Shopping Event on Thursday, Dec. 4.

On Thursday, Dec. 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. downtown retailers welcome Dowagiac Union High School Jazz Band, under the direction of Benjamin VanRoekel. On the final Thursday, Dec. 18, Hunter Schuur brings his choir members to the central business district, as they stroll the downtown from 5 to 7 p.m.

Specialty shops hosting the Extended Hours Holiday Shopping Event, which are open until 7 p.m., include: Bombshell Boutique, Bow Wow Bakery & Bath, Caruso's Candy Kitchen, Cottage Gallery, Deck the Halls, Isabella Grace Retreat Center and fabric store, The Marshall Shoppe, Oh My – Old Made New, Olympia Books, Rosy Tomorrows, Vincent J. Jewelers, Who Knew? Consignment and Yarn on Front.

New this year, shoppers who join us for the promotion and make a purchase Thursday evenings between 5 and 7 p.m. will be entered into a holiday drawing that awards $100 to the winner in Universal Dowagiac Gift Cards. Phillipson said shoppers can enter the drawing at each of the 13 locations, as many times as they wish, every time they make a purchase.

"At this time of the year, there's an added excitement in the air during the early evening hours when lighted lamppost garlands and the Christmas lights above light your way into our specialty shops," Phillipson said. "The interiors of our late-1800s buildings share the same magical feeling."

Phillipson invited shoppers to wrap up their evening of merriment and shopping by dining at any one of Dowagiac's fine and casual dining restaurants, all of which will be open for the event.

LAPOINTE

From page A1

supports Brownsville No. 1 as the first and longest integrated public school in MIchigan, perhaps in the country. The Bonine House, Carriage House and Bogue House are open for tours from May to October. The Brownsville School is open during Underground Railroad Days Festival, and special events.

URSCC invites all to Christmas at the Bonine House, from 1 to 6 p.m. December 1-14, weather permitting.

For more information visit URSCC at www.urscc.org.

HARDING'S

From page A1

"Losing a longstanding local business is never easy. Harding's has been woven into the daily routines of countless residents, and its presence will be missed. At the same time, with the new Front Street redevelopment preparing to move forward, I remain hopeful that we are entering a period of change and growth. The revitalization planned for the area surrounding Harding's brings hope that new opportunities will emerge, opportunities that can strengthen our community, support local families, and help move Dowagiac toward an even brighter future.

"Having grown up with a mom who worked in the grocery business for nearly 30 years, and having spent four years working in a grocery store myself, I know firsthand how important these stores are to the life of our communities and neighborhoods. To all the dedicated employees who have given their time, kindness, and hard work over the years, I wish you the very best in your transition ahead.

"And to our community, let's continue to show up for the local businesses and people who call Dowagiac home."

This is a developing story. Heraldpalladium.com/leaderpub will be updated as more information becomes available.

TREE

From page A1

Dowagiac Union alumna and cancer survivor Jayne White was this year's featured speaker. White, who was diagnosed with breast cancer, was happy to report that she was approaching two years cancer-free. She credited her family and her community for helping her overcome the disease and encouraged men and women to get mammograms.

"Don't be scared to just call and get that information and come in and get it done because it could just save your life," White said. "Don't be scared to just call and get that information and come in and get it done because it could just save your life," White said.

So far, the foundation is moving toward its $20,000 goal for the Tree of Love Campaign with more than $15,000 raised. The campaign, which began Oct. 1 and runs until the end of the year, provides free mammography services for uninsured or low-income women and men living in Cass County. According to Beacon Dowagiac Hospital, one in eight women will develop breast cancer and one in five can't afford a mammogram. To date, Beacon has provided more than 300 free screening services.

Major sponsors for the event were Honor Credit Union, Lisa Koenig and UHY Cares, The Marshall Shoppe and Marge Morrow.

This year's event was the 40th for the Tree of Love campaign and 14th for Cass County. Beacon Health System, which completed its acquisition of Ascension Southwest Michigan this summer, has been fully supported the campaign according to Ascension Borgess-Lee Foundation director Beth Cripe

"They see the need in Cass County, they see the need in Southwest Michigan and they've been completely supportive to continue the program," she said. "It's been a wonderful transition."

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Holtec gets $400M to develop small reactors

By PAXTON STAFF

COVERT — A Holtec International project has secured hundreds of millions of federal dollars to develop the first small modular nuclear reactors made in the United States.

Holtec previously announced plans to deploy two SMR-300 small modular reactors at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant in Covert Township.

The U.S. Department of Energy announced this week the project will receive $400 million in federal cost-shared funding to advance the project. The Tennessee Valley Authority is also receiving $400 million to advance deployment of a small modular nuclear reactor at the Clinch River Nuclear site in Tennessee, and to accelerate the deployment of additional units with Indiana Michigan Power, whose service area extends into Southwest Michigan.

"Today's announcement is a major step toward deploying small modular reactors in Michigan and strengthening the nation's energy future," Holtec Senior Manager of Government Affairs and Communications Nick Culp said. "Advancing the SMR-300 at Palisades will help deliver reliable power and long-term economic and job benefits to the region."

Each small modular reactor would generate about 300 megawatts of energy, enough to power about 300,000 homes, in addition to the Palisades plant's 800 megawatts of generation.

The Palisades plant is in the process of coming back online after it was closed for decommissioning in May 2022. The plant and the two SMRs would provide enough power for 1.4 million households and businesses, Holtec officials said.

"Today's announcement will lower energy costs, reaffirm Michigan's clean energy leadership, and show the world that we are the best place to do business," Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said in a prepared statement. "This historic investment will double Palisades' capacity, provide more clean energy for Michigan homes and businesses, and protect good-paying Michigan jobs. By restarting Palisades, we will make history as the first state to reopen a shuttered nuclear plant. I'll keep working with anyone to grow Michigan's economy and build a more affordable, clean energy future right here in Michigan. Let's keep getting it done."

Previously, the DOE finalized a $1.52 billion loan agreement with Holtec to aid in the restart of the Covert Township plant, and the USDA awarded more than $1.3 billion to support the restoration of service at the plant and lower energy costs, including a $650 million grant to Wolverine Power Cooperative to reduce the cost of power produced at Palisades.

Niles man sentenced to probation for child abuse

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES — A Niles man was sentenced to probation for child abuse in sentencings Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Justin David Walthour, 26, of Niles, pleaded guilty to third degree child abuse and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for three days in jail and $658 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred in July in Niles when Walthour's two month old child had her femur fractured.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch said the child's mother was asking for probation as Walthour has a full-time job he might lose otherwise and not be able to support the family.

Walthour took responsibility for his actions. "I love my child very much, she's my first baby," he said. "I want to be a part of her life, I don't want to be somebody she's afraid of. I want to be her father."

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein said he didn't think there was any malice of Walthour's part. "You were playing with your child and you played too hard and broke her femur," he said. "You need parenting skills to better yourself as a man, father and husband."

Also Monday, an Illinois woman was sentenced to probation and jail for third offense drunk driving.

Kimberly A. Hannon, 56, of Cicero, Illinois, pleaded guilty to third offense drunk driving and was sentenced to two years probation, 180 days in jail with credit for five days served 480 hours of community service and $1,913 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred July 3 in Niles.

Defense attorney Shannon Sible said that Hannon had a clean record up until 2018 and then started accumulating drunk driving convictions. He said that she wants to get counseling to help her fight her addiction. Hannon said she had been "very irresponsible" in drinking and driving, saying that she could have "absolutely" hurt someone or herself.

Judge Hosbein said that he had a hard time believing her desire to get help. He noted that this was her fifth drunk driving conviction. "I'm not sure that leniency has done you any good," he said.

A Niles man convicted of tampering with his tether was sentenced to jail and ls likely headed back to prison. He had been on parole from an April 17, 2022 third offense drunk driving conviction.

Jesse Paul Arnold, 45, of Niles, pleaded guilty to tampering with an electronic device and was sentenced to 270 days in jail with credit for no days served and $948 in fines, costs and restitution for the cost of the tether.

The incident occurred March 12 in Niles Township.

Defense attorney Carri Briseno said that Arnold's parole agent has indicated that he will be returned to prison. She noted that Arnold has been in jail for 55 days but received no credit because of his parole status. The jail term is to be served consecutively to the prison sentence.

Arnold said he has been battling his addiction his whole life. He said he's been put on medication since being in jail and also hopes to get treatment when he is in prison.

Damien Latrell Brown, 48, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for six days served and $598 in fines and costs. The incident occurred July 18 in Niles Township.

Brandyn Davon Chambers, 36, of Westland, Michigan, pleaded guilty to fleeing and eluding police and was sentenced to two years probation, 100 days in jail with credit for 65 days served and $658 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Sept. 29 in Niles.

Aaron Francis Gingrasso, 33, of Niles, pleaded guilty to second offense use of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 120 days in jail with credit for 69 days served and $198 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Sept. 24 in Niles Township.

Jess Hart Treiber, 48, pleaded guilty to attempted larceny in a building and second offense domestic violence and was sentenced to credit for 131 days served and $648 in fines and costs. The incident occurred July 3 in Niles Township.

In other sentencings:

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you, Dowagiac first responders

Dear Editor & Community,

This past Sunday my two year-old son had an unexpected medical emergency. It was a day my wife and I would love to erase from our memories but if we must remember it, let us remember it for the amazing community support that we received. First we want to thank the 911 dispatcher for keeping my wife calm and instructing myself while I preformed CPR. Second, let us give thanks to the first on scene, Officer Darnell Riddick with the Dowagiac Police Department. We live in rural Dowagiac and are not under the jurisdiction of the city police department. Officer Riddick stated he heard the call over the radio and his parental instincts kicked in.

While I left with EMS, he stayed after to calm my five-year-old son, letting him know how brave he was and that his little brother was going to be OK. We'd love to thank the army of volunteer firemen who showed up with trucks and plows so that EMS could safely get my son to the ER. Thank you to all the medical providers with both SMCAS and Ascension Hospital Dowagiac who were all so attentive and caring. And lastly, thank you to the staff at Dowagiac Police Department who called my wife later that night to check on our baby because they "were all so worried" and wanted to make sure he was okay.

With our deepest sincerity and love,

Ashton & Veronica Vanantwerp, Dowagiac

Write us

Here's how to submit a letter to the editor:

Email: news@leaderpub.com

Regular mail: Editorial Page, Leader Publications, 25 N. 2nd St., Niles MI 49120

All letters should include a daytime telephone number and street address for verification. Letters must be 500 words or fewer. Letters relating to candidates and ballot issues in upcoming elections will be limited to 300 words. Leader Publications reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, grammar, inappropriate content and libel.

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Sports

MSU athletics gets $401 million gift
Page B2

Got results?
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Fitzgerald named Michigan State's head football coach

MSU ATHLETICS

EAST LANSING — One of the winningest football coaches in Big Ten history, Pat Fitzgerald has been named head football coach at Michigan State University, MSU Vice President and Director of Athletics J Batt announced Monday.

Fitzgerald was formally introduced as the 27th head football coach in Michigan State history at a press conference Tuesday afternoon.

Over 17 seasons as the head coach at Northwestern University, Fitzgerald won 110 games, while guiding the Wildcats to 10 bowl games, five AP Top 25 finishes and a pair of appearances in the Big Ten Football Championship Game after winning the Big Ten West Division title in both 2018 and 2020. He was named the 2018 Big Ten Coach of the Year, and in 2020, won the Dodd Trophy Coach of the Year Award after leading the Wildcats to a No. 10 national ranking and a win in the Citrus Bowl over Auburn.

His 110 wins rank 14th all-time for a Big Ten football coach, while his five bowl game victories rank tied for 12th among conference coaches.

"Today marks the beginning of a new era for Michigan State Football," said Batt. "Pat Fitzgerald is widely recognized as an exceptional football coach, whose teams play with extreme toughness and grit, demonstrate continual improvement and maximize potential. Pat is an excellent fit for Michigan State Football, as he understands the Big Ten, has great relationships throughout the Midwest and

See **FITZGERALD**, page B1

Matthew Mitchell / MSU Athletics Communications

MSU Football Coach Pat Fitzgerald (center) poses with MSU President Kevin Guskiewicz (left) and Athletic Director J Batt (right).

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Looking to the south

Dowagiac and Edwardsburg to play Jimtown in 2026

By KEN FOX
For Leader Publicatios

EDWARDSBURG — A pair of local football teams will face off against an Indiana school next fall.

Edwardsburg and Dowagiac have reached agreements with Jimtown High School to face off in football in 2026 and beyond. Located in Elkhart, Ind., the school has an enrollment of 538 students and competes in the Northeast Corner Conference.

"We have a contract with Edwardsburg in Week 3 for the next two years, but we'd love for it to be a four-year deal," said Jimtown athletic director Scott Hamstra. "We do have a four-year deal with Dowagiac though ... hopefully it will become a good rivalry for both schools."

With the Northeast Corner Conference deciding to play seven conference games next fall, the Jimtown football team was left with two open spots for the 2026 season, as NECC schools Fairfield and Lakeland were forced to drop the Jimmies.

With Jimtown's Indiana Northern State Conference having just six members, that leaves four non-conference spots for Hamstra to fill each year.

The Jimmies will again open the season with Wawasee in 2026 as well as rival Concord. Hamstra fielded several inquiries from teams throughout the Midwest before reaching agreements with Dowagiac and Edwardsburg for the remaining two spots.

Jeff Douglas / For Leader Publications

Edwardsburg football will play Jimtown in 2026 and beyond.

"It's been quite a journey," Hamstra admitted. "We looked into playing a team from the Detroit area and we even had a contract with a team from California that was going to fly here, play us on a Friday and then watch Notre Dame on Saturday. Unfortunately, they had to cancel that contract."

Hamstra was even contacted by a team near the Ohio border with Pennsylvania, that was willing to pay Jimtown $5,000 to come play there.

"They were a big school and very good program, so we turned them down," Hamstra admitted.

Dowagiac, Buchanan, Berrien Springs and Brandywine belong to the Lakeland Conference in Michigan, which has just those four teams, leaving athletic directors scrambling each year to find games.

Edwardsburg belongs to the Wolverine Conference and posted a 6-4 record with a very young team in 2025, while Dowagiac was 5-4. Both teams lost in the first round of the Michigan High School Athletic Association state tournament.

Hamstra said if Edwardsburg doesn't want to renew its contract after the first two years, the Jimmies could play Berrien Springs.

"I talked to Dowagiac athletic director Brent Nate [and Brandywine] and they both said they're tired of driving two hours north to try and find a game," Hamstra said. "With such a small conference, they're kind of in the same boat we are trying to find games."

Dowagiac previously came to Indiana to play NorthWood four times between 1997 and 2001, with the Panthers winning all four games.

Niles boys basketball downs Dowagiac

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Niles boys basketball team won its home opener in convincing fashion Thursday night.

The Vikings defeated visiting Dowagiac 74-28 to secure Mark Haase's first win as head coach of his alma mater.

Brayden Favors led all scorers with 21 points and Brenden Olsen had 12 while Acie and Ceon Kirtdoll scored eight points apiece. Niles led 36-12 at half and 12 of 14 players scored for the Vikings.

"Dominant defensive performance. Good team win," Haase said. "We moved the ball really well. The Kirtdoll brothers really set the tone on the defensive end with their ball pressure. Favors had a solid night as did Olsen. We did a great job of attacking the rim all night."

Niles (1-1) hosts Brandywine at 7 p.m. Monday.

Buchanan 57, Eau Claire 22

Tuesday at Buchanan

BUCHANAN (57)
Tyler Frame 11, Jaret Seddon 8, Zander Ruiz-Grant 8, Owen Thompson 6, Liam McBeth 6, Ben Bosse 5, Preston Payne 5, Marley Hinds 3, Derenik Lewis 3, Ari Johnson 2. Totals 21 11-21 57
EAU CLAIRE (22)
D Travis 6, M Davis 6, Kay Lash 4, R Fisher 2, C Williams 2, A Fort 1. Totals 10 2-9 22

Buchanan	**18**	**32**	**51**	**-**	**57**
Eau Claire	**10**	**12**	**14**	**-**	**22**

3-point baskets: Buchanan 4 (Payne, McBeth, Seddon, Ruiz-Grant). Total fouls: Buchanan 14, Eau Claire 15. Fouled out: None.

21 Wolverines earn All-Big Ten honors in football

MICHIGAN ATHLETICS

ROSEMONT, Ill. — The University of Michigan football team saw 21 student-athletes earn all-league honors on the conference's All-Big Ten offensive, defensive and special teams lists. The Big Ten announced the 2025 position award winners and All-Big Ten honors on Wednesday as part of the B1G Today program on Big Ten Network.

Offense

Running back Jordan Marshall was named a second-team choice by the media and a third-team selection on the coaches' ballot. Marshall led the way for the U-M rushing attack this season, starting four games after fellow backfield mate Justice Haynes suffered an injury at USC (Oct. 11). Marshall racked up 932 rushing yards on 150 carries (6.2 yards per attempt) with 10 touchdowns. In Big Ten play, his 823 rushing yards ranked fourth, his eight rushing touchdowns ranked tied for third, and his 6.9 yards/carry led the league.

Tight end Max Bredeson, guard Giovanni El-Hadi and running back Haynes received third-team recognition from the coaches, and all three received honorable mention honors from the media. Team captains, Bredeson and El-Hadi helped bolster U-M's 16th-ranked rushing attack, which averaged 213.2 yards per game. Haynes was among the national leaders in rushing yards (857), rushing touchdowns (eight), and rushes of 50-plus yards (four) at the time of his injury. He finished ninth in the Big Ten in full-season rushing yards, despite only appearing in seven games.

Honorable mention recognition went to offensive linemen Jake Guarnera (guard; coaches and media) and Andrew Sprague (tackle; coaches and media), tight end Marlin Klein (coaches and media), wide receiver Andrew Marsh (coaches and media), and offensive lineman Greg Crippen (center, media).

Defense

Edge rusher Derrick Moore was U-M's first-team honoree. Moore posted 29 tackles, including 10.5 for loss with 10 sacks (both team-leading figures), three pass breakups, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery. A team captain, Moore led the Big Ten in sacks during league play and ranks 13th in the nation with 0.79 sacks per game.

Linebacker Jimmy Rolder (second team, coaches and media) and defensive back Zeke Berry (second team, media; third team, coaches) secured second-team honors. Rolder led U-M's defense with 69 tackles, including 7 for loss with 2 sacks, and had three pass breakups, one fumble recovery and one interception during a career-best season. Berry led U-M with 11 pass breakups, including one interception, and posted 28 tackles on the year.

See **HONORS**, page B1

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FITZGERALD

From page B2

embodies the values on which our program was built. His incredible passion will resonate throughout the program, connecting with all members of our Spartan community, including student-athletes, coaches, staff, alumni and donors.

"As an institution, we are committed to providing the resources and infrastructure required to realize our shared vision of competing for championships, and with Pat leading the way, Spartan Football is positioned for sustained success at the Big Ten and national level. We are excited to welcome Pat, his wife, Stacy, and sons, Jack, Ryan and Brendan, to our Spartan family."

The hire requires formal approval from the MSU Board of Trustees with the next scheduled meeting on Friday, Dec. 12.

"I am honored to be named the head football coach at Michigan State University," said Fitzgerald. "I'd like to thank President Guskiewicz and Athletics Director Batt for this opportunity. This is a program with a deep and storied tradition, a passionate fan base, and a commitment to excellence that extends far beyond the football field. What excited me most about this opportunity was the vision for what Michigan State can be for years to come. We will restore tradition, and I'm eager to earn the trust of our players, alumni, and fans while competing at the highest level."

During Fitzgerald's tenure at Northwestern (2006-22) his teams also excelled in the classroom, earning seven American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) Academic Achievement Awards, the most of any team in the FBS during that time span. In 2019, the Wildcats became the first Power 5 team to post a perfect 100 percent Graduation Success Rate (GSR).

Fitzgerald is not only the winningest coach in Northwestern football history, he also was the leader of a stout Wildcat defense that won back-to-back Big Ten Championships in 1995 and 1996. He was twice named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and he became the first player ever to win both the Bronko Nagurski Trophy and Chuck Bednarik Award two times, a feat he accomplished his junior and senior seasons. Fitzgerald also won the 1996 Jack Lambert Trophy, awarded to the top linebacker in college football, and was named NU's recipient of the Big Ten Medal of Honor in 1997, recognizing him for athletic and academic excellence. The only two-time consensus All-American in Wildcat history, Fitzgerald was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2008 as player; he is also a member of the Northwestern Athletics Hall of Fame.

Fitzgerald began his coaching career as a defensive graduate assistant at Maryland (1998) and Colorado (1999) before getting his first full-time position as a linebackers and special teams coach at Idaho in 2000. He returned to Northwestern under Randy Walker as a defensive backs coach in 2001 and coached the linebackers from 2002-05 while adding recruiting coordinator duties in 2004-05. Fitzgerald was named Northwestern's 29th head coach on July 7, 2006, following the tragic death of Walker on June 29, 2006. At the age of 31, Fitzgerald became the youngest head coach in the FBS during the time of his hiring.

Fitzgerald's program took off in his third season, going 9-4 and earning the first of five consecutive bowl bids from 2008-2012. For leading Northwestern to nine wins for the first time since 1996 – when he was a player – Fitzgerald was named the 2008 Big Ten Coach of the Year by the Touchdown Club of Columbus, a semifinalist for the George Munger Coach of the Year Award and a finalist for the Liberty Mutual Coach of the Year Award.

He recorded his first 10-win season in 2012 as the Wildcats finished ranked No. 17 in the AP Poll following a win over Mississippi State in the Gator Bowl. Northwestern won 10 games again in 2015 and went 6-2 in the Big Ten to earn a bid to play in the Outback Bowl on New Year's Day while finishing No. 23 in the AP Poll. In 2021, Fitzgerald became just the second Big Ten coach to receive the Stallings Award, which is given annually to a Division I head coach for their contributions in their community and achievements on the field.

Fitzgerald was very active in the community during his tenure at Northwestern, participating in numerous charitable causes, including the Special Olympics and the NU chapter of Uplifting Athletes, while also visiting schools and children's hospitals. For his work in the community, Fitzgerald was named the honorary coach of the 2017 Allstate AFCA Good Works Team.

Fitzgerald and his wife, Stacy, have three sons: Jack (21), Ryan (19) and Brendan (16).

Dowagiac boys open season with 64-29 loss to Vicksburg

By SCOTT HASSINGER
For Leader Publications

Scott Hassinger / For Leader Publications

Dowagiac sophomore guard Aiden Martin (5) drives the lane as Vicksburg's Anthony Marchese (22) defends his shot in the first half of Tuesday's game on the Chieftains' home floor.

DOWAGIAC — First-year Dowagiac boys' basketball coach Craig Schau knows his Chieftains must play good solid defense to be successful in the 2025-26 season.

Schau discovered in Tuesday's 64-29 non-conference season-opening loss at home to Vicksburg that his Chieftains still have a long way to go on that end of the floor.

"I thought our effort most of the game was really strong, I was pleasantly surprised with how hard we fought. I like our defensive strategy, but we failed in one aspect and that was giving up uncontested three-point attempts and [Mitchell Beyer]over there probably had at least 33 points on us," Schau said.

Beyer, Vicksburg's slick shooting six-foot senior guard scored a career and game-high 35 points, including making seven of the Bulldogs' eight three-pointers on the night.

Anthony Marchese added nine points for the Bulldogs, who had just four official practices due to the football team's extended Division 4 playoff run that ended with loss in the semifinal round. Several basketball players were also members of the football team. Rocco Marchese, Trevor Colter-Coville and Peyton Hudgins all added four points each for Vicksburg, now 1-0.

The Bulldogs also owned a 31-27 rebounding advantage.

Anthony Marchese yanked down eight rebounds for Vicksburg, while Cade Chisolm secured four.

A'shjionn Nickens pulled down nine rebounds for Dowagiac, while Isaiah Weatherspoon, Aiden Martin and Brenden Green all grabbed four apiece for the Chieftains (0-1).

"Last year we didn't do a very good job of rebounding. Our focus this season is needing all five guys to be crashing the boards. I saw some promise, but we have some work to do in that area as well," Schau added.

Vicksburg finished the game shooting 27-of-60 (45 percent) from the floor and 2-for-6 (33.3 percent) at the charity stripe.

Dowagiac, meanwhile, was held to 13-of-55 (24 percent) from the field and just 2-of-12 (17 percent) at the foul stripe. Senior guard Devin Rock scored nine points to lead the Chieftains and Aiden Martin finished with six.

Rock's hustle on the floor was a very instrumental part in Dowagiac's attack.

"No pun intended, but Devin is the Rock of our defense. He;s our main ball defender. He did his job tonight and he inspires the other kids to play hard as well," Schau said.

Dowagiac opened up a 7-0 lead to start the contest, including a three pointer by Rock and a 8-foot jumper by senior Braden Diaz. But the Bulldogs would reel off the last three buckets of the period, including two Beyer triples to grab a 8-7 advantage.

Riley McCaffery's bucket inside for Dowagiac early in the second quarter brought the Chieftains within two, 11-9. But Vicksburg went on another 8-0 spurt, including two more Beyer triples, to build a 19-11 lead. Beyer would later add another triple and layup to help the Bulldogs increase their lead to 28-15 entering halftime.

Schau also praised the effort of McCaffery and Martin on the boards, along with Breland inside and A'shjionn Nickens.

"A'shjionn is only going to get better and better. He's active everywhere diving for loose balls, getting rebounds and we just love his effort," Schau said.

"We have a lot of first-year varsity guys. Our No. 1 identity will be how well we come out and play defense by forcing our opponent to do things we want them to do. We have to make our free throws as well. This group hasn't played a ton together so we are still looking for our offensive identity. There's a lot of new faces on varsity."

Dowagiac junior center John Breland (40) is double-teamed in the post by by Vicksburg defenders Braylen Vallier (5) and Rocco Marchese (20).

A 20-8 run during the third quarter, including points from seven different players, pushed Vicksburg's lead to 48-22 entering the fourth quarter.

Vicksburg head coach Randy Small was pleased with the win but knows his ballclub must improve in many areas with a tough Wolverine Conference slate of games rapidly approaching.

"Mitchell shot the ball very well for us. Obviously we have to be able to spread the ball around more to be successful. In the opening minutes we were kind've lost out there, but he (Beyer) got us going with his shooting. We were kind've flat and couldn't run our system as smoothly as we want to. We got better defensively as the game wore on though," Small said.

Dowagiac visits Niles on Thursday, while Vicksburg travels to Otsego on Friday.

MSU receives $401 million gift from Greg Williams

MSU ATHLETICS

EAST LANSING — Michigan State University today announced a historic $401 million commitment from Greg and Dawn Williams.

Made through the university's "Uncommon Will, Far Better World" campaign and in support of MSU Athletics' FOR SPARTA initiative, the commitment is the largest single commitment in the history of MSU and one of the largest single amounts in college athletics history. MSU officials believe it will dramatically transform Spartan Athletics and fuel academic excellence across multiple disciplines, reinforcing MSU's mission to empower students and serve communities across Michigan and beyond.

"The commitment that Greg and Dawn are making represents an extraordinary act of generosity and belief in Michigan State University's future," said MSU President Kevin M. Guskiewicz, Ph.D. "We are deeply grateful for this historic commitment, which will strengthen our academic mission and support our student-athletes in meaningful, lasting ways. Their investment in both the university and the future of Spartan Athletics reflects a bold, shared vision for excellence and innovation. This moment will have a profound impact on generations of Spartans, and we are honored by their confidence in MSU."

"This commitment reflects our belief that we should give back to our community… and to the place we call home. MSU is not only the face of our community, but the health and well-being of East Lansing depend on a thriving and successful MSU. In this regard, we're proud and blessed to be in a position to support MSU's leadership and its ambitious vision for the future," said Greg and Dawn Williams. "Some of our family's fondest and most bonding memories revolve around MSU athletics, so these funds are well placed in supporting an institution that contributed so meaningfully to our lives."

Of the total commitment, $290 million will be used in support of Spartan Athletics as part of FOR SPARTA: The Capital Initiative for MSU Athletics, which was announced on Tuesday. Officials believe the gift will accelerate MSU's ability to compete nationally and build a sustainable foundation for long-term success, while putting college athletics on notice that Michigan State has the resources to be an industry leader.

In addition to gifts to the university, the Williamses are investing $100 million in an entity to be formed by the affiliated organization Spartan Ventures. The investment reflects a determination to see Spartan Athletics lead in an era of unprecedented change across college athletics. Spartan Ventures will serve as the revenue, innovation and development arm of MSU Athletics – creating new revenue streams, expanding strategic partnerships, enhancing student-athlete opportunities and driving long-term financial strength. This investment enables MSU to modernize and scale its approach to athletics program funding, ensuring that Spartan student-athletes have the resources, opportunities and competitive advantages they need in a rapidly evolving environment.

HONORS

From page B2

Rayshaun Benny (third team, coaches and media) and Ernest Hausmann (third team, media; honorable mention, coaches) picked up third-team recognition. Benny led U-M interior linemen with 31 tackles, including 3 for loss with 1.5 sacks, and broke up two passes to go with one fumble recovery. Hausmann registered 68 stops for the Maize and Blue, including 5.5 for loss with 1 sack and one pass breakup.

Edge rusher Jaishawn Barham (coaches), defensive backs Jyaire Hill (coaches and media), Brandyn Hillman (coaches and media), TJ Metcalf (coaches) and interior lineman Trey Pierce (media) received honorable mention recognition.

Among specialists, Greg Tarr was a third-team choice by the media, and kicker Dominic Zvada was an honorable mention selection from the coaches. Tarr is also a semifinalist for the Patrick Mannelly Award given to the nation's top long snapper.

Linebacker Cole Sullivan was named the team's sportsmanship honoree.

Michigan's full award listing is below.

All-Big Ten Conference (Coaches)

Offense

Third Team: Max Bredeson (tight end), Giovanni El-Hadi (guard), Justice Haynes, Jordan Marshall (running back)

Honorable Mention: Jake Guarnera (guard), Marlin Klein (tight end), Andrew Marsh (wide receiver), Andrew Sprague (tackle)

Defense

First Team: Derrick Moore (edge)

Second Team: Jimmy Rolder (linebacker)

Third Team: Rayshaun Benny (interior), Zeke Berry (defensive back)

Honorable Mention: Jaishawn Barham (edge), Ernest Hausmann (linebacker), Jyaire Hill (defensive back), Brandyn Hillman (defensive back), TJ Metcalf (defensive back)

All-Big Ten Conference (Coaches)

Special Teams

Honorable Mention: Dominic Zvada (kicker)

All-Big Ten Conference (Media)

Offense

Second Team: Jordan Marshall (running back)

Honorable Mention: Max Bredeson (tight end), Greg Crippen (center), Giovanni El-Hadi (guard), Jake Guarnera (guard), Justice Haynes (running back), Marlin Klein (tight end), Andrew Marsh (wide receiver), Andrew Sprague (tackle)

Defense

Second Team: Zeke Berry (defensive back), Derrick Moore (edge), Jimmy Rolder (linebacker)

Third Team: Rayshaun Benny (interior), Ernest Hausmann (linebacker)

Honorable Mention: Jaishawn Barham (edge), Jyaire Hill (defensive back), Brandyn Hillman (defensive back), Trey Pierce (interior)

All-Big Ten Conference (Media)

Special Teams

Third Team: Greg Tarr (long snapper)

Big Ten Sportsmanship Award Winner: Cole Sullivan (linebacker)

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

2026 Aston Martin DBX S is helplessly indulgent, fast and true luxury

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Photos by Aston Martin / TNS

There was a time when SUV and Aston Martin would have gone together like Château Lafite and Cheez Whiz. But times change, and even Aston Martin must bend to the cruel geometry of the modern luxury market.

But here's the surprise: the 2026 Aston Martin DBX S is not a betrayal of the brand. It is, in fact, the most Aston Martin thing they've done in years. After all, Aston Martin has been producing sportier S variants since the 1953 DB3 S.

That means that the 2026 Aston Martin DBX S is not your wife's yoga-going, Range Rover-driving, Whole-Foods-parking-lot-barge. This is a 717-horsepower, twin-turbocharged V8 sledgehammer in Savile Row tailoring.

It's Aston's answer to the question no one asked: What if James Bond had kids? Well, of course he'd drive a 2026 Aston Martin DBX S.

Its heart is AMG's venerable twin-turbocharged 4.0-liter V8 with 717 horsepower, 664 pound-feet of torque and a 9-speed dual clutch transmission offer the kind of acceleration that was once reserved for Group B rally cars.

It's fitted with the Aston Martin Valhalla hypercar's turbocharging setup, while its all-wheel-drive system, the DBX S can send 50 percent of its torque to the front and up to 100 percent of its torque to the rear wheels. This allows 0-to-60-mph mph to happen in a brief 3.1 seconds, despite being a 5,000-pound luxury SUV. In addition, the steering has been sharpened, the suspension stiffened, and the body's been sprinkled with carbon fiber like truffle shavings on a $80 plate of pasta.

The result is a car that turns in with real intent. It's not dainty; it's far too big for that. But it's extraordinarily precise, composed, and weirdly agile. You can actually hustle this thing down a twisting country road without fearing for the local shrubbery.

It's surprisingly effortless, providing the unstoppable force of a collapsing glacier. Its engine snarls like a bull terrier that's been kept too long on a short chain. It's too fast, too loud, too fierce and utterly irresistible, an SUV that lifts weights and doesn't skip leg day.

But if Mr. Bond wants to achieve that level of performance, he must order some lightweight options that saves 104 pounds compared to a standard DBX, a notable weight advantage, but one that comes at a fairly significant upcharge. On the list is the Lightweight Mesh Front Grille ($1,400), the Dark Chrome / Carbon Interior Pack ($6,400), Twill Carbon Veneer ($5,700), AMR Lime Mag Brake Calipers ($2,000), Upper Gloss 2x2 Twill Carbon Fiber Pack ($11,200), Lower BX S Carbon Fiber Pack ($20,900) and 23-inch Magnesium Wheels ($22,300). These along with some other options, including the magnificent Bowers & Wilkins Audio System, pushed the as tested price from $270,500 to $397,900.

Inside, it's everything you expect from an Aston: hand-stitched leather so buttery it could qualify as a controlled substance, knurled metal knobs that feel like they were milled in a Swiss watch factory, and a seating position that manages to be commanding without being obnoxious. Just as compelling is the integration of Apple CarPlay into the DBX's 10.25-inch infotainment and 12.3-inch driver information screens. It's seamlessly beautiful, carried out with a sophisticated Aston Martin elegance that makes the current Mercedes-Benz infotainment system look like a garish third-world casino remnant.

That said, you might be wondering about its competitors. Well, there's the Lamborghini Urus, but that's a rolling nightclub. There's the Bentley Bentayga, which is brilliant, but utterly humorless. In comparison, the Aston Martin DBX S has soul. It's loud, slightly impractical, and occasionally silly. But it's also charming, glamorous and ferociously alive.

The 2026 Aston Martin DBX S is not simply a fast SUV. It's rarified, a reminder that character still matters, that a badge can still mean something. Even in this age of electrification and algorithmic design, there remains a place for something irrational, theatrical, and unapologetically indulgent. Aston Martin may never again build a car as pure as the DB4 GT Zagato or as beautiful as the original DBS. But with the DBX S, they've built something that is honest in its ambition and impressive in its execution. And in a world increasingly obsessed with efficiency, that feels like a small and necessary rebellion.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2026 Aston Martin DBX S

Base price: $270,500

Engine: Twin-turbocharged 4.0-liter V8

Horsepower/Torque: 717/664 pound-feet

Top speed: 193 mph

0-60 mph: 3.1 seconds

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 16 mpg

Fuel required: Premium

Length/Width/Height: 198/79/66 inches

Ground clearance: 7.5 inches

Cargo capacity: 23 cubic feet

2025 Ford F-250 goes 6-figures, kicks competition

By MARC D. GRASSO
Boston Herald (TNS)

Marc Grasso / Boston Herald / TNS

Ford has entered Grasso's Garage again this year: It is time to show off the F-Series Super Duty pickup, the F-250. Our tester is the F-250 Super Duty 4×4 Crew Cab Platinum – the valedictorian of all trucks with its 48 consecutive years of bestselling work vehicles.

Powering our $75,000+ base-price F-250 was the 6.7L High-Output Power Stroke Diesel engine and 10-speed auto TorqShift transmission. Fit for every job site, the F-250 is ready to work, ride or tow as it tops the charts in all categories.

Wrapped in beautiful Glacier Grey with black accents, the F-250 Platinum is a head-turner for sure.

Its Platinum upgrades boast tremendous luxury and comfort while still being able to perform in all areas around the house or job. We utilized a slew of options on our tester including the Tonneau cover, vehicle console safe, Pro Power Onboard charger, power moonroof, retractable bedside steps, max recline front seat and the FX4 off-road package. Standard on our tester was a 12-inch infotainment screen, 120V power outlet, LED lights, Head-Up display, 360-degree camera and Ford Co-Pilot. Let's not forget the smooth suspension and onboard scales for weight calibration with Smart Hitch.

It is no secret that Ford is the king of trucks; from their wide array of model and package options, Ford Motor Co. has it figured out. Starting with design all the way to comfort, the F-250 is just another prime example of who the competition is chasing.

But this all comes with a big price. Break out your wallet, as pickup trucks are no longer just for work. Our tester was certainly luxurious and ready for a long drive, but with a $103,000 total price, this truck adds camping, towing and much, much more to its list of usages in the hope of satisfying your every want/need in a pickup truck.

2025 Ford F-250 Super Duty 4×4 Crew Cab

MSRP: $77,865

As Tested: $103,915

Classifieds Marketplace

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0900 LEGALS

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PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025-0873-DE-R

Court address:
811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085
Court phone no.
269-983-7111

Estate of Lawrence Olan Smith, deceased
Date of birth: 06/15/1935

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Lawrence Olan Smith, died 08/19/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Jeananne Christine Woodrick personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 11/25/2025

Attorney: John R. Colip
Bar no. P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Jeananne Christine Woodrick
Personal representative(s)
1293 Missions East Drive
Niles, MI 49120
269-240-7551

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE
RE: Sale by Online Auction of Contents of Self-Storage Unit
To all interested persons, including, Carlton Cunningham, Connie Cunningham, and Judy Cunningham:
Take Notice:
The Contents of Storage Unit #25, located at Diamond Lake Self Storage, 22954 Diamond Cove Road, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031, will be sold via online auction, beginning December 23, 2025, at 12:00 a.m. through January 6, 2025, at 12:00 p.m., on storagetreasures.com. Items to be sold include, a motorcycle helmet, finishing carpentry items, hinges, clasps, gun related items, industrial sprayer, fishing equipment, plates, trolling motor, Christmas decorations, cabinets, and a Grill Pro smoker.

AUCTION DATE: Monday, December 6TH @ 7:00 am D.W. Enterprise 54961 M-51 North Dowagiac, MI 49047

Unit #17 - D. Velthouse
Unit #57 - C. Hatfield

Case No. 24-000609-CH Circuit Court Sale In pursuance and by virtue of an Order Granting Motion for Default Judgment and for Judicial Foreclosure as to All Defendants in the Circuit Court for the County of Cass, State of Michigan, made and entered on the 4th of August, A.D., 2025 in a certain cause therein pending, wherein CitiMortgage, Inc. was the Plaintiff and Any and all heirs, Assignees and Devisees of Esther A. Gogley and Rosalie Simpson were the Defendants. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I shall sell at public auction to the highest bidder, at public vendue, at the Cass County Courthouse (that being the place of holding the Circuit Court for said County), on the 14th of January, A.D., 2026 at 10:00 o`clock in the forenoon, Eastern Standard Time, the following described property, viz: A certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Penn, County of Cass, State of Michigan: LOT NUMBER TEN (10), IN THE VILLAGE OF JAMESTOWN, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDED PLAT THEREOF. 14-100-100-010-00 c/k/a: 19125 Quaker St, Cassopolis, MI 49031 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale. Clint Roach, Deputy Sheriff _/s/ Melissa Z. Prantzalos Melissa Z. Prantzalos of Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. Attorney for CitiMortgage, Inc. Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 1576877 (11-15)(12-20)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Timothy Grigalanz and Faustina Lynn Grigalanz, Husband and Wife Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., solely as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans Foreclosing Assignee: Planet Home Lending, LLC Date of Mortgage: March 20, 2024 Date of Mortgage Recording: March 22, 2024 Amount claimed due on mortgage on the date of notice: $255,187.48 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in the Township of Ontwa, Cass County, Michigan, and are described as: That part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, which is described as beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East, along the North 1/8th line of said Section 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20"East, 661.22 feet; thence. South 89°56'30" West 662.53 feet to the West line of said Section; thence, North along said line 661.37 feet to the point of beginning. EXCEPT, that part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, which is described as: Beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section 14; thence North 89°57'15"East along the North 1/8th line of said Section, 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East, 300.00 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West, 662.18 feet; thence North 300.00 feet to the point of beginning. ALSO EXCEPTING, That part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Township 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, described as: Beginning at a point on the West line ' of said Section 14, a distance of 1622.74 feet South of the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East 662.18 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East 361.23 feet; thence South 89°56'30" West 379.00 feet; thence North O°O3'2O" East 276.23 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West 283.80 feet to the West line of said Section 14; thence North on said Section line 85.08 feet to the point of beginning. Commonly Known as: 70335 Martin Rd., Edwardsburg, MI 49112 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or upon the expiration of the notice required by MCL 600.3241a(c), whichever is later; or unless MCL 600.3240(16) applies. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Purchaser: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee for any reason. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest, and the purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee, or the Mortgagee's attorney. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. This notice is from a debt collector. Date of notice: 11/22/2025 Potestivo & Associates, P.C. 251 Diversion Street, Rochester, MI 48307 248-853-4400 321574 (11-22)(12-13)

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025-0886-DE-R

Court address:
811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085
Court phone no.
269-983-7111

Estate of Teratha L. Henderson, deceased
Date of birth: 05/07/1935

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Teratha L. Henderson died 06/10/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Eddie Henderson III personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 11/26/2025

Attorney: John R. Colip
Bar no. P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Eddie Henderson III
Personal representative(s)
317 Fulton
Buchanan, MI 49107
269-697-9567

Notice of Self Storage Sale
Please take notice Just Simple Storage - Menominee located at N710 County Rd 577, Menoninee, MI, 49858 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an Online auction via www.bid13.com on 12/18/2025 at 12:00 PM. Unless stated otherwise, the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #56. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. 7528-326524

PUBLIC NOTICE
AUCTION
Niles Storage, 2457 Yankee St.
Niles, MI 49120
December 13 @ 4:00pm
Owner's lien - overdue rents

Unit # 52 Name: Brooke King
Misc, household items, dresser, children's clothing/toys, multiple lg boxes

Sogol I. Plagany (P69690)
Orlans Law Group, PLLC
P.O. Box 5041, Troy MI, 48007
248-502-1359

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43RD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CASS COUNTY
25-000508-CH

Court address: 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031
Court phone no.: (269)445-4412

ORDER REGARDING ALTERNATE SERVICE

U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, as Trustee, as successor-in-interest to U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely as indenture trustee, for the holders of CIM Trust 2021-R1, Mortgage-Backed Notes, Series 2021-R1. c/o Plaintiff's attorney
Plaintiff(s).

V.

Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins.
Defendant(s).

THE COURT FINDS:
Service of process upon the defendant, Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins cannot reasonably be made as provided in MCR 2.105, and service of process may be made in a manner that is reasonably calculated to give the defendant actual notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard.
IT IS ORDERED:
Service of the summons and complaint and a copy of this order shall be made by the following method(s).: First class mail to 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Tracking or firmly affixing to the door at 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Publishing for three consecutive weeks in the Cass County Legal News pursuant to MCR 2.106(D) and via certified mail return receipt requested to the last known address of: 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. For each method used, proof of service must be filed promptly with the court.

/s/ Judge Mark A. Herman (P34735) 10/23/2025
Filed 10/23/2025 Monica McMichael Cass County Clerk

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on JANUARY 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Joshua A. Hernandez and Laura E. Hernandez, husband and wife, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans, Mortgagee, dated August 11, 2021 and recorded August 20, 2021 in Liber 1202, Page 232 and Loan Modification Agreement recorded on May 1, 2023, in Liber 1231, Page 2419, Cass County Records, Michigan.
Said mortgage is now held by The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, an officer of the United States, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Eighty-One Thousand Three Hundred Eight and 3/100 Dollars ($181,308.03).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public vendue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on JANUARY 7, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Howard, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
Lot 5 in Misty Acres, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1-H of plats, Page 395, Cass County Records.
2202 Invicta Drive, Niles, Michigan 49120
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: November 29, 2025
File No. 25-013858
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400 (11-29)(12-20)

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43rd CIRCUIT COURT

ORDER FOR SERVICE BY PUBLICATION/POSTING AND NOTICE OF ACTION

CASE NO. 25-000628-CZ

PLAINTIFF'S NAME:
Edwardsburg Estates MHC, LLC C/O-Plaintiff's Attorney

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY:
The Law Offices of Aaron D. Cox, PLLC
By: Aaron D. Cox (P69346) /Elizabeth E. Ellison (P82098)
23820 Eureka Road Taylor, MI 48180
Phone: 734-287-3664

V.

DEFENDANTS:
The Unknown Heirs, Devisees, and Assigns of Otto Krueger

TO THE ABOVE NAMED-DEFENDANTS
IT IS ORDERED:
1. You are being sued in this court by the plaintiff to terminate ownership interests in the 1978 Holly Park Manufactured Home (VIN 6027388) and declare manufactured home abandoned. You must file your answer or take other action permitted by law in this court at the court address above on or before 28 days from the date of last service. If you fail to do so, a default judgment may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint filed in this case.
2. A copy of this order shall be published once each week in THE DOWAGIAC DAILY NEWS (LEADER PUBLICATIONS) for three consecutive weeks, and proof of publication shall be filed in this court.
3. shall post a copy of this order in the courthouse, and at 69425 M-62, Lot # 2, Edwardsburg, Michigan 49112 (Site of Manufactured Home).
4. A copy of this order shall be sent to THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANTS at the last-known address by registered mail, return receipt requested, before the date of last publication, and the affidavit of mailing shall be filed with this court.

Hon. Mark A. Herman (P34735)
JUDGE
DATE 11/18/2025

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Donald Gordan Davies, III, Married Man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Churchill Mortgage Corporation, its successors and assigns Foreclosing Assignee: PennyMac Loan Services, LLC Date of Mortgage: November 17, 2023 Date of Mortgage Recording: November 29, 2023 Amount claimed due on mortgage on the date of notice: $176,696.64 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in the Village of Vandalia, Cass County, Michigan, and are described as: Beginning at a point which is 507.5 feet South of the Southeast corner of State and Maple Streets in Section 26, Township 6 South, Range 14 West; thence East 300.5 feet; thence South 132 feet; thence West 300.5 feet to the East Line of Maple Street; thence North 132 feet to the Place of Beginning. Commonly Known as: 60795 Maple St., Vandalia, MI 49095 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or upon the expiration of the notice required by MCL 600.3241a(c), whichever is later; or unless MCL 600.3240(16) applies. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Purchaser: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee for any reason. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest, and the purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee, or the Mortgagee's attorney. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. This notice is from a debt collector. Date of notice: 12/06/2025 Potestivo & Associates, P.C. 251 Diversion Street, Rochester, MI 48307 248-853-4400 319660 (12-06)(12-27)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Micah J. Tartt, a married man and Karrie Tartt, his wife and Christine Rae Davis, an unmarried woman Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.
Date of Mortgage: July 10, 2003
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 14, 2003
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $36,364.03
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in City of Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: LOT NUMBERED FOURTEEN (14) HARTER, ANDREWS AND BLISH ADDITION TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN
LIBER 34 OF DEEDS, PAGE 136, CASS COUNTY RECORDS.
Common street address (if any): 116 E Railroad St, Dowagiac, MI 49047-1448
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage
foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: December 6, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248)642-2515 1578472 (12-06)(12-27)

0900 LEGALS

NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY BOARD December 17, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Cass District Library Main Branch 319 M 62 Cassopolis, MI 49031
The Cass District Library Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed library budget for the fiscal year January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026, at the Main Branch of the Cass District Library located at 319 M 62 Cassopolis, Michigan, 49031 on December 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing. A copy of the budget, including the proposed property tax millage rates, is available for public inspection at the Cass District Library located at 319 M 62 Cassopolis, Michigan, 49031 during business hours.
The Cass District Library must hold a public hearing before the final adoption of the budget. Any interested person will be given the opportunity to be heard at the public hearing regarding the proposed budget.
The Cass District Library Board will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting upon 3 days' notice to the Library Board. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the library by writing or calling the following: Christopher Korenowsky, Library Director, Cass District Library located at 319 M 62 Cassopolis, Michigan, 49031, 269-357-7822 ext. 101.
Dated: December 6, 2025
/s/ Christopher Korenowsky
Library Director
Cass District Library
319 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031
269-357-7822 ext. 101

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OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Michigan DNR photo

Frost-covered leaves are shown on the ground in the Upper Peninsula.

Feelings in the frost

By JOHN PEPIN
Michigan DNR

In the frosty mornings on these November days, with the orange-red sun burning through the crystalline ice and frost like a laser, I find an honest peace and headspace wide enough for my mind to roam.

Over the span of only a few hours overnight, this thick frost has coated every branch of every tree and shrub. Shocks of once green grass growing in the meadow along the old logging road, now are dressed in their gray-white and sparkling covering.

The weight of the frost pulls some plants and branches down toward the ground.

As the sun burns on, frost smoke rises over the marsh and then disappears into the sunlight the higher it drifts.

There's something about seeing the trees and everything else flocked with frost that makes the silence over the landscape a little more pronounced. It also seems as though the air is cleaner and more intoxicating when I breathe it in deep.

If I touch a frosted branch, leaf or pine bough, the warmth from my hand breaks the spell as the frost melts. The illusion is gone.

So, I don't touch the branches or anything else. I want to keep that sense of profound peace, silence and magical wonder existing all around me for as long as I can.

Usually on days when I find myself within the confines of a snow globe scene such as this, I discover that I have forgotten my camera.

Today is no exception.

That's OK. I would love to have images from today to reflect upon in the days ahead, but a camera is a distraction from my absolute presence in these moments.

From where I am standing, I can't hear any birds calling, tapping or otherwise making noise. I don't blame them for staying tucked away in their warm little places.

They might be like me sometimes when I'm camping and I know it's freezing outside the tent. I don't get out of my warm sleeping bag unless I need to.

The need to get out usually involves having to pee.

I know some dudes keep a pee jug or jar in their tent for just such an occasion, but that's just not something I'm going to do.

I think my first experience with this was when I lived in California and was riding north from Los Angeles to the Monterey area for an Audubon conference. My buddy's truck had a camper on it, and we parked to sleep.

In the middle of the night, of course, I had to brave the cold outdoors to answer nature's call.

When I got back in and finally got resituated and enveloped once again within the warmth of my sleeping bag, I heard a liquid making a pinging sound as it spilled off the inside of an empty glass bottle.

The sound was immediately recognizable.

"What are you doing?"

"Gotta be prepared."

I don't know what he did with the bottle, and I don't want to know.

I had mental pictures of it tipping over and rolling around on the floorboard while he was driving. Yuck!

As though he had heard me thinking about the lack of birdlife around me, a chickadee popped out of one of the trees and landed not far away from me, offering me a chick-dee-dee-dee – dissolving my reverie.

"Well, hello Mr. Chick-diddle-diddle."

As he went about his way, the silence returned to wrap itself around me like a jacket three times larger than what fits me.

I have been searching this week for as much silence as I can get. The good news is that these warm days, cold night conditions make the icy-blue silence easier to find.

Outside my house, in the late, wee hours, there is an almost pounding silence most nights. On others, I can hear the highway buzzing with traffic, even though it's a couple miles away, emergency sirens or dogs barking.

This week, I have experienced a couple nights of pure pleasurable silence, another couple filled with the wondrous sounds of northern saw-whet, great horned and barred owls and one night with far-off sirens, which led to the yipping of coyotes.

I was hoping to catch a glimpse of a peaking meteor shower, but even though the skies were clear, the production of meteor sightings was low – at least for me.

I start walking down an old trail that is covered with patches of frost that mask the dirt and gravel in some places. This little path can take me down along the river.

I am certain the water is warmer than the air this morning, even with the sun shining. I move slowly under some big white pine trees, their sap certainly not flowing anywhere.

The sky is cerulean up above the five-needled green pine branches at the highest tops of these trees. I can smell that Christmasy aroma of these big giants, the ground littered with fallen rust-red needles coated in a salting of frost.

Nearby, I see some balsam firs and pop one of the sap bubbles on one of the tree trunks. The clear goo covers my fingers like aloe vera, and the evergreen aroma is so strong as I take a big sniff of it.

This is one of those smells that can define the season for me. If I was deaf, dumb and blind, if I smelled balsam sap it would mean Christmas to me.

I feel the same about pumpkin spice smell defining the harvest season, which would include Halloween and Thanksgiving for me.

I keep walking along toward the river with the sap sticking to my fingers. I continue to raise my hand to my nose to keep smelling the balsam. Taking in that smell with a deep cold breath is exhilarating.

As the sun moves higher into the sky, warming bigger and wider areas, I retreat farther down the trail into the shadows where I can remain amid the still frosty forest.

I find a log to sit on for a few minutes to watch the black water of the river drift past in a smooth, thick flow reminding me of oil.

There are swirls in the water as it moves and other places where the surface is disturbed by the current, but the river is completely quiet.

Along the riverbank, there are dried brown grasses from the summertime past, those wonderful days of the greenest greens and the teeming life and living of seemingly everything all at once.

Some of the dried and dead blooms remind me of pinwheels. Their stems are bent and frosted, like the half-eaten and frosty seed tops of gone-but-not-forgotten black-eyed Susans.

I feel the wind drift up in a lonely swirl that moves across my face and touches me. I start to feel a hollow, dead sensation moving in a whirl throughout my body.

The lowest point in Colorado is higher than the highest point in 18 other states

By SPENCER McKEE
The Gazette (TNS)

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Given that Colorado is a state with an average elevation of 6,800 feet above sea level and a maximum elevation of 14,438 feet, it's not much of a surprise that even Colorado's lowest points are indeed still quite high.

Those searching for the lowest point in Colorado should look to the northeast corner of the state, in Yuma County, where the Arikaree River can be found. Stretching 156 miles long through the North American Great Plains, the Arikaree River winds mostly through the state of Colorado before briefly passing through Kansas and into Nebraska, eventually connecting with the Republican River.

At the point where the Arikaree River crosses the state line out of Colorado, the lowest point of the Centennial State can be found at just 3,317 feet above sea level.

Not only is this point higher than any other state's lowest point, it's also higher than the highest point found in 18 states plus the District of Columbia.

The next closest contender for state with the highest 'low point' is Wyoming, which drops to 3,099 feet, followed by New Mexico, which has a low point of 2,842 feet. It's extremely unlikely that this ranking will change any time soon.

As far as the lowest low points go, multiple sea-level states contend for this honor, though some landlocked states are close, including Arkansas, with a low point of just 55 feet. The lowest point in the country is Death Valley in California, at 282 feet below sea level. California is also home to the highest point in the contiguous U.S. – Mount Whitney at 14,494 feet.

With a population of around 10,000, there isn't a lot going on in Yuma County, Colo., from an outdoor recreation standpoint. The community here is heavily tied to agriculture and ranching, growing more corn than any other county in the Centennial State.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Audubon Christmas Bird Count: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Dec. 30. Sarett is looking for volunteers to count birds as a part of Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count event to create a census of birds. Volunteers will cover a portion of the official count area and drive around to tally up all the birds they see. To volunteer, please call (269) 927-4832 ext. 102 or email Mike at mikem@sarett.org.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

A deer-baiting bust, angling tips, seized ammunition: Rolling with a Minnesota conservation officer

By BOB TIMMONS
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

WACONIA, Minn. – As light drained from the sky, conservation officer Alexander Birdsall bumped along in his Silverado 2500, criss-crossing isolated farm fields and patrolling for trouble.

His focus west of town was "outlaw area," as he called it. This time of year, shining deer and shooting from this stretch of gravel are common offenses, and not always caught.

A small dome of light, almost headlamp-like, beamed from a low area about 50 yards off the road. Then it flicked off as Birdsall rolled past.

The light could easily have been missed. Yet Birdsall has had an eye on that spot since he saw a bit of yellow corn poking through snow a few years back. He would be back.

That same afternoon, he checked anglers' licenses. He discussed lake conditions with a windsurfer. He surveilled a possible baiting location. A deer hunter called him. A federal land officer rang him up about poaching.

"We joke that we work when everyone else plays," said Birdsall on a blustery November afternoon in Carver County.

The refrain is especially true this time of year. In autumn, conservation officers, or COs, find themselves rushing from one task to another in the woods, fields and waters of Minnesota.

The scene is already busy with pheasant, duck, small-game and bow hunters, and late-season anglers. And conservation officers' duties have changed and accelerated over the last 20 years, said Robert Gorecki, one of their lead officers at the Department of Natural Resources.

They now enforce a wider array of recreation, from foraging to ATVing to water toys, and routinely respond to vehicle wrecks, domestic disputes and other emergency calls.

The deer gun opening weekend, Nov. 8-9, added the task of monitoring hundreds of thousands of hunters looking to fill their freezers.

"Traditionally, it has been our busiest week," said Gorecki, assistant law enforcement division director, of his 203 officers.

Minnesota DNR conservation officer Alexander Birdsall drives the backroads on his shift Nov. 5 in Carver County. He stops to talk with a man about what kind of shells he was using to hunt pheasants.

A heavy week

Conservation officers filed about 900 reports from events between Nov. 3 and the deer opening weekend, according to the DNR.

They follow up on tips from the public about suspected wildlife law violations. A trail camera and hunting gear were illegally left overnight on public hunting land near Marine on St. Croix. In Lincoln County, a neighbor reported someone shooting pheasants from a vehicle. In Le Sueur County, an officer mediated a tiff between a duck hunter and an angler who were working the same lake.

Back in Waconia, Birdsall reflected on a mix of activity he's come to expect in what he calls "farm country in city counties." He started work in the Waconia field station in 2016. Birdsall is the lone officer for most of Carver County, where the west metro meets rural Minnesota.

That can make his domain both appealing and busy, with Hennepin County, the state's most-populous county, as a neighbor. Four COs patrol Hennepin County.

"You can get in a quick hunt in a short drive," he said.

Birdsall said it's common for people to trespass on private property without knowing it. He has had to educate people about the rules of taking home roadkill deer. He has seen sawed-off heads and antlers and abandoned carcasses. Most rural folk know that they need to contact him to get a free possession tag.

"It gives hunters a bad look," Birdsall said.

Baiting also doesn't represent hunters well. Birdsall issued one of more than 60 deer-baiting citations written during the week across the state. Other offenders transported uncased or loaded firearms in vehicles. They hunted on prohibited state land, or put up illegal stands in Wildlife Management Areas. Some hunters didn't wear the required blaze orange. All told, COs issued nearly 140 citations over those seven days.

At one point, his radio crackled with news of a vehicle emergency. He considered going, but knew others nearby would get there sooner. The need for CO assistance is even more pronounced in rural areas, Gorecki said. COs like Birdsall are at times the closest officers able to respond.

Birdsall puts about 200 miles on his Silverado most days. He parked at a popular shore fishing spot near the Crow River dam in Watertown.

Good-natured and friendly, he checked anglers' licenses. There were still northern pike to be had. He'd catch up with a few anglers on an isolated channel of the Minnesota River. "Where are they biting?" one of them asked. Birdsall dispenses fishing tips, too.

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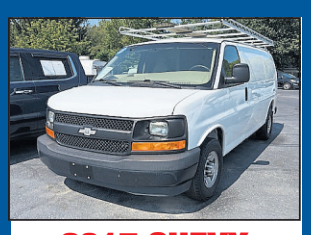

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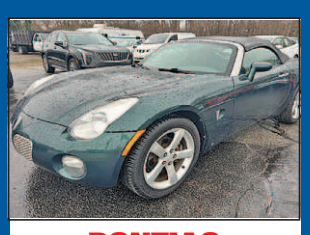

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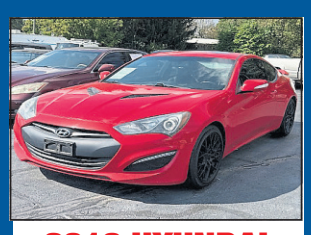

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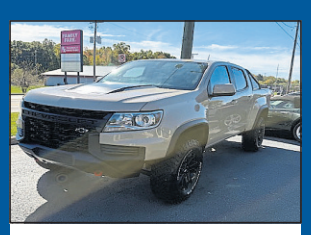

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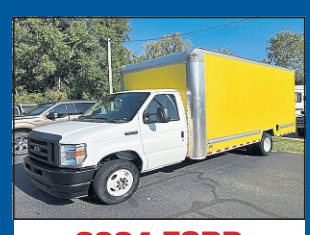

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